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ABSTRACT

The criterion validity of four subscales of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory is investigated. The subscales are Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Social Commitment, and Tolerance. Teachers were asked to nominate the three students who were "most like" and the three students who were "least like" verbal descriptions of these traits. Their eleventh grade students took Form C of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory. The results replicate previous findings that subscales of the Inventory discriminate students rated by teachers as highly mature from other students. The results extend earlier findings by showing that when a criterion group of reasonable size is obtained, three of the four subscales also discriminate students named as least mature from students not so designated. (Author/RC)

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ON THE VALIDITY OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL MATURITY INVENTORY: RELATIONSHIP TO TEACHER NOMINATIONS

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Introductory Statement

The Center for Social Organization of Schools has two primary objectives: to develop a scientific knowledge of how schools affect their students, and to use this knowledge to develop better school practices and organization.

The Center works through three programs to achieve its objectives. The Schools and Maturity program is studying the effects of school, family, and peer group experiences on the development of attitudes consistent with psychosocial maturity. The objectives are to formulate, assess, and research important educational goals other than traditional academic achievement. The program has developed the Psychosocial Maturity (PSM) Inventory for the assessment of adolescent social, individual, and interpersonal adequacy. The School Organization program is currently concerned with authority-control structures, task structures, reward systems, and peer group processes in schools. It has produced a large-scale study of the effects of open schools, has developed the Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) instructional process for teaching various subjects in elementary and secondary schools, and has produced a computerized system for school-wide attendance monitoring. The Careers program (formerly Careers and Curricula) bases its work upon a theory of career development. It has developed a self-administered vocational guidance device and a self-directed career program to promote vocational development and to foster satisfying curricular decisions for high school, college, and adult populations.

This report, prepared by the Schools and Maturity program, examines the validity of the Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Social Commitment, and Tolerance subscales of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the criterion validity of four subscales of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory. The subscales are Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Social Commitment and Tolerance. Teachers (n=18) were asked to nominate the three students who were "most like" and the three students who were "least like" verbal descriptions of these traits. Their eleventh grade students (n=190) took Form C of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory. The results replicate previous findings that subscales of the Inventory discriminate students rated by teachers as highly mature from other students. The results extend earlier findings by showing that when a criterion group of reasonable size is obtained, three of the four subscales also discriminate students named as least mature from students not so designated.

Introduction

As part of an ongoing effort to demonstrate the criterion validity of the psychosocial maturity subscales, this study examines the relationship between teacher perceptions of subjects' behavior on criterion traits and those subjects' scores on the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory. The concept of psychosocial maturity, described by Greenberger and Sørensen (1974), identifies nine aspects of maturity. These are: Work Orientation, Self-reliance and Identity --aspects of individual adequacy; Communication Skills, Enlightened Trust and Knowledge of Major Roles --aspects of interpersonal adequacy; and Social Commitment, Tolerance and Openness to Socio-Political Change --aspects of social adequacy. These nine attributes have been operationalized as nine separate self-report subscales which comprise the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory.

Previous studies of the validity of the psychosocial maturity subscales have demonstrated in elementary and high school age youngsters a theory-predicted developmental increase in maturity with age (Greenberger, Knerr, Knerr and Brown, 1974). The psychosocial maturity subscales have also been shown to be independent of social desirability (Greenberger, Knerr, Knerr and Brown, 1974). Other validity studies at the senior high school and college levels have shown that the Individual Adequacy Scale and its component subscales (Work Orientation, Self-reliance and Identity) are positively related to measures of self-esteem and personal adjustment (Josselson, Greenberger and McConochie, 1975). The Social Adequacy Scale

and its component subscales (Social Commitment, Tolerance and Openness to Change) have been found to discriminate college students engaged in social action projects from those not so engaged (Bond, Josselson, Greenberger, and McConochie, 1974).

Another study of the validity of the psychosocial maturity subscales attempted to relate fifth graders' scores on these scales to teachers' ratings of them on the criterion traits (Josselson, Greenberger and McConochie, 1974). For all subscales except Trust, students whose teachers rated them as "very much like" the criterion-relevant trait-description scored higher on the corresponding PSM subscale than did subjects whose teachers did not so rate them. This finding suggested that the PSM subscales did reflect greater maturity, observable by teachers, in eight of the nine areas. This study further found, however, that, with the exception of the Social Commitment and Change subscales, students whose teachers rated them low on, or "very much unlike," the criterion trait were not significantly different in their PSM scores from students who were not rated low. It was suggested that this result might be due to the skewed distribution of teachers' ratings. Teachers were twice as likely to rate students extremely high on a trait as to rate them extremely low. The researchers felt, therefore, that imposing a fixed distribution on the raters would provide a more rigorous test of the PSM subscales' seeming inability to detect children whom teachers regard as low in maturity.

The present study has two objectives. The first is to replicate the finding that the PSM subscales are related to teacher perceptions of the presence of students' maturity-relevant behavior. The second is to test

the hypothesis that the PSM subscales can discriminate students whom teachers identify as low in maturity-relevant behaviors when teachers are forced to rate some students in this category. These hypotheses, in the present study, are focused on four PSM subscales, chosen to reflect those behaviors that teachers are most likely to observe directly, namely: Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Tolerance and Social Commitment.

Methods and Procedures

The entire 11th grade class of a small urban high school, consisting of 190 students, was asked to respond to the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory. Eighteen teachers who taught 11th grade students were also asked to complete a "nomination" form. This questionnaire asked teachers to give the names of three 11th grade students who were "most like" and "least like" seven PSM-related trait descriptions. Three of these trait descriptions tapped dimensions of Work Orientation: (a)"A student who works hard at a task and keeps working until he/she gets it done. Someone who is persistent in his work"; (b)"A student who always hands work in completed and on time. Someone who is conscientious about his work"; and (c)"A student who really likes to work. Someone who takes pleasure in working." Two aspects of Self-reliance were included: (a)"A student who makes important decisions on his/her own. Someone who is self-reliant"; and (b)"A student who will express his/her ideas even though other people may disagree. Someone who does not always need group approval." One trait description identified high Social Commitment: "A student who relinquishes self-interest to work for group goals." And one trait description called

for names of socially tolerant and intolerant students: "Someone who gets along well with people of different backgrounds or beliefs." Students nominated at least once by at least one teacher were considered "high" in the relevant trait, while students nominated low at least once by any one teacher were considered "low." In only one instance was a subject nominated as both high and low in any given category. These nominations were discarded from the sample.

Results and Discussion

Students who were rated by teachers as high on one of the four PSM traits, Work Orientation (n=52), Self-reliance (n=45), Tolerance (n=28) and Social Commitment (n=24), were significantly higher in their scores on the corresponding PSM subscale than those not rated high. At the low end, students who were rated low by their teachers in Work Orientation (n=29), Self-reliance (n=32) and Social Commitment (n=9) scored significantly lower on the corresponding PSM subscale than students not rated low. There were no significant differences, however, for Tolerance.[1] Tables 1 and 2 present these data.

Tables 1 and 2 Here

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[1]Note that even with a forced-distribution procedure for nominating students, the distribution is again skewed in the direction of nominating "winners" rather than "losers."

The results replicate previous findings that students whose teachers perceive them as high in Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Tolerance and Social Commitment score higher on these PSM subscales. This provides further evidence that these PSM subscales have criterion validity; i.e., they are tapping traits that are expressed in behavior.

Use of the forced-distribution "nomination" procedure also demonstrates that when teachers can be made to identify a reasonable number of students as low in a PSM attribute, these students can be discriminated from other students with the PSM subscales. For Work Orientation and Self-reliance, where most teachers gave names of students who seemed poor workers or dependent on group support, nominated students were found to be significantly different from non-nominated students in their PSM subscale score. Although significant results are found at the low end of Social Commitment, this result must be viewed cautiously since only nine students comprise the "low" group. The failure of the low Tolerance group to significantly differ from others is probably due in part to the small n in the group: teachers were either unwilling or unable to name more than twelve students whose behavior could be deemed intolerant.

These data seem to indicate, therefore, that where a criterion group of reasonable size is obtained, the PSM subscales can discriminate both students who are high and students who are low in maturity-related behavior from other students.

Summary

Four psychosocial maturity subscales --Work Orientation, Self-reliance, Social Commitment and Tolerance-- were investigated in relation to teachers' perceptions of students' behavior in these areas. Students nominated as high and students nominated as low in Work Orientation, Self-reliance and Social Commitment obtained significantly different subscale scores from other students, and from each other, in the expected direction. Students nominated as high in Tolerance scored significantly higher on the Tolerance scale than those not rated high.

These findings replicate previous findings obtained on a sample of younger children, which show that the PSM subscales can discriminate students whose teachers rate their behavior as high in maturity from other students. These findings further extend the criterion validity of three PSM subscales by demonstrating that the subscales differentiate subjects rated low in PSM traits from subjects not rated low.

Table 1

Comparison of Mean PSM Scores of Students
Nominated High with Other Students

PSM Scales	High	Other	F
Work Orientation	2.92 (n=52)	2.68 (n=138)	8.99**
Self-Reliance	3.37 (n=45)	3.12 (n=145)	10.91**
Social Commitment	3.36 (n=24)	3.06 (n=166)	6.47*
Tolerance	3.36 (n=28)	3.12 (n=162)	5.60*

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 2

Comparison of Mean PSM Scores of Students
Nominated Low with Other Students

PSM Scales	Low	Other	F
Work Orientation	2.53 (n=29)	2.78 (n=161)	6.11*
Self-Reliance	3.02 (n=32)	3.21 (n=158)	4.66*
Social Commitment	2.74 (n=9)	3.13 (n=181)	5.24*
Tolerance	2.97 (n=12)	3.16 (n=178)	NS

*$p < .05$

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